



Parker Field

Howard Owen

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Les Hacker doesn't seem to have an enemy in the world - other than whoever tried to kill him with a high-powered rifle while he was sitting on a park bench six floors below Willie Black's living room window. Les is the closest thing Willie has had to a father figure in a checkered life of drinking, divorces and journalism. He certainly has better qualifications than any of the other men Willie's mother, Peggy, took in over the years. Of course, as Willie would say, that would only make him a tall midget.

Now, with Les clinging to life, Willie decides to take a short sabbatical and do a story about his surrogate dad and the last minor league baseball team Les played on, the 1964 Richmond Virginians.

There's only one problem. As Willie tries to get in touch with other members of that team, he discovers that they are almost all below ground, most of them long before their allotted three-score and ten years. The cops already have Les's shooter in jail, a homeless guy who hangs out in the park. The shot was fired in his coat pocket, case closed. Willie's publisher and the police want him to stop wasting his time and theirs and get back on the beat. Willie becomes convinced, though, that someone, against all logic, is killing the entire starting lineup of a long-forgotten minor-league baseball team. And when Willie gets his teeth on the truth, he's a pit bull who won't let anything short of a shot to the head force him to let go.

In this third Willie Black novel, after Hammett Prize finalist *Oregon Hill* (2012) and *The Philadelphia Quarry* (2013) Howard Owen brings back his flawed, ink-stained hero, a reporter who seems to do his best work when he's chasing a story nobody else wants, who can be his own worst enemy and the underdog's best friend.

Parker Field Details

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Author : Howard Owen

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From Reader Review Parker Field for online ebook

Betty Dickie says

There is something vintage about Howard Owen's books. They are set in present day, but have an old fashioned noirish feel to them. Or maybe it's the references to Parker Field (which changed it's name almost 30 years ago), Penny Lane, the Prestwoud and so on. But the story lines are spot on and the mystery engaging. I'd like Willie to be a little less negative, but it just adds to the noir quality I guess. It's just pleasant to read a book that talks about places I know and can visualize, with inside jokes that I get.

Katherine says

A former minor league baseball player in his seventies is shot with a high powered rifle and is lying in a hospital bed clinging to life. No one can figure out who would want to shoot Les, an unassuming, kind man who does not seem to have any enemies. When it is discovered that an addled former military man, now homeless, appears to have broken into a vacant condo and shot him, Les' sort of adopted son decides to investigate.

Willie Black is a newspaper man, heavy drinker and three time loser in the marital game. Listening to Les' buddy, Jimmy, talk about the old days and the team members and a team groupie, not so affectionately called Fannie Fling, Willie decides to do a piece on the old starting line up of Les' old team, the Richmond Vees. He soon discovers that a number of the old guys are dead, their deaths, in some instances, rather premature and, in others, somewhat suspicious.

Connecting with the younger sister of one of his boyhood friends, Cindy Peroni, Willie heads out to interview the kids, widows and ex-wives of some of the deceased as well as the one other remaining Vee.

What he discovers brings him to death's door and the solution to a puzzle he didn't know existed.

Fast moving, surprising, interesting, amusing and sad this slim volume is the perfect rainy Sat afternoon read. Going to look for more Willie Black stories--he's a good old fashioned story teller, that guy. Think he has printers' ink for blood.

Louis says

Baseball & Murder

Got an advance copy of Parker Field by Howard Owen from Goodreads

The plot is relatively simple: someone is killing off all the members of a 1964 minor-league baseball team. Although the baseball part of this novel is pretty much on the periphery of the action, you still get a sense of the sights, sounds and especially the smells of a worn-down, minor league stadium on a hot summer afternoon.

What I especially liked about this particular mystery is the author doesn't throw in a lot of red-herrings. I mean in your typical murder/mystery novel, there seems to always be 5 or 6 people - who it seems - at one point or another - could have 'done it'. Not here. You may have a clue as to WHY they're being stalked, but - at least for me - until the very end I had no idea by whom they were being stalked. Because it just seems

impossible that any of the characters we meet would have had it in for Les. They truly loved the guy.

One slight caveat, there are a lot of characters. We don't necessarily 'meet' them all, but there are a lot of names being bandied about. And because a lot of them are baseball players, they also have nicknames. About 25 or 30 pages into this, my head started to spin. I started a list at that point. I haven't done that since taking a course in Russian Literature in college. Now, I'm not comparing this to War and Peace – just saying that it helps to keep a list to keep all the characters straight – at least for me it did.

This is a very good story and a fairly quick read. I liked it a lot.

Chris says

Willie Black book number three is an enjoyable, but not particularly substantial work of crime fiction. Sometimes it's enough to just be entertained. I give this a little extra for the baseball backstory since I'm a fan of the sport.

Steven Traylor says

I got this book on the good reads first view sweepstakes. As a 39-year-old man who lives in Denver now and grew up in Richmond Virginia the title of the book caught My eye. When they tore down Parker field in the mid-80s I was at the last game with my dad. I can still remember the win in the last game at the field Larry Wissington hit an inside the park homerun. I love that old stadium especially playing "cup ball" down by the concession stands with all the kids from around town. It had so much character oozing out of it that I could recognize even as an 8,9 or 10 year old. When the Diamond opened the following spring I could tell that the experience. of the game would never be the same again. Before we left the stadium my dad pulled some of the old wooden box seats out they were painted orange we kept them in our backyard until they rotted away. I don't know what he wanted to do with them but I guess he wanted to take a piece of his childhood with him that night also.

. I found the storyline to be a little slow to start. the hero of the book is hard to embrace at times. All that being said once you hit about page 100 and it starts building the murder mystery involving the Virginians , the book gain some steam and becomes intriguing. The character of Franny fling is intriguing I guess I would like to have gotten a little bit more into the backstory of what the other Virginians thought about what was going on.

Overall it was summer they need and I would recommend it to family and friends already have. Thanks to first reads for the copy of the book and thanks to Mr. Howard Owen on for producing literature about the area where I grew up.

Cathy says

An easy read, with good character development. I am not a baseball fan, but I thoroughly enjoyed how baseball was introduced throughout the story.

William Wells says

Another winner in the series about Richmond newspaper reporter Willie Black by journalist Howard Owen written in clear, concise prose that displays both wit and compassion.

Theresa says

Howard Owen's Parker Field is the third in his series featuring Willie Black, reporter for a struggling newspaper in Richmond Virginia, functioning alcoholic, and baseball enthusiast. Having read only this one so far, its fast-pace, engaging narrative voice, and interesting plot moves me to go back and read the other two. Les Hatcher, a former minor league baseball player, the longtime boyfriend of Peggy, Black's mother, and the "closest thing to a father" Black has had, is shot while sitting on a bench outside Black apartment building. Searching for the shooter brings Black back to the the minor league Richmond Vees. As he discovers that almost all of the 1964 starting lineup for the Vees is no longer living—with most dying under suspicious circumstances—Black is led back into the team's 1960's history, and particularly the involvement of a young woman who left her Vermont home for a larger, more exciting world and ended up committing suicide. Baseball lore figures large in the plot, which was no problem for this baseball fan, but even more engrossing was the character of Willie—flawed in many ways, with ex-wives and a serious drinking career in his past and present, but deeply committed to the people he loves and cares about, no matter how flawed they, too, may be. I recommend this book to people interested in mystery fiction, the current state of print journalism, tough guys with interesting interior lives and engaging writing.

Karen says

This was of interest to me because it deals with former baseball players.

I don't usually jump into book 3 of a series without at least reading book 1.

This did not hamper my understanding of the characters. The writing was good, but it is in first person, which is not always what I enjoy. I liked the plot and the detecting of this reporter. After awhile I got used to the tense.

I might try more of this series even if it does not focus on baseball.

David Marshall says

It's very good but the edge is taken off the excitement by the overly melodramatic ending.

<http://opionator.wordpress.com/2014/0...>

Sheila says

Another Willie Black mystery, another great standalone drama of hard-drinking journalism and hard-hitting crime, and a wonderfully evocative literary novel founded in the history of baseball's minor league, Howard Owen's Parker Field is fascinating, absorbing and enjoyable.

Willie Black is a protagonist full of flaws, like a wonderful old house riddled with character and dry rot. He's faithful, but easily tempted; he's quickly wounded, then he wounds; and his dogged determination lands him in some seriously dangerous places. But he's surely someone you'd want on your side if the world started falling apart. And he's no more broken than the land where he lives, his wounded friend is no more forgetful than history, and the newspaper where Willie works is no more honest or dishonest than the cops.

The story's told in first person with a convincingly cynical voice, reminiscent of old noir movies brought all up to date. Time and place feel vividly real, and authentic dialog carries the reader along with the protagonist, finding and following clues as he tries to guess at the history and mystery behind his friend's most unexpected attacker. After all, who would shoot at an Alzheimer's patient sitting peacefully on a bench?

Parker Field is the sort of thinking man's mystery where every detail's important, every character has a tale to tell, and every path explored will promise just another step toward the solution. No rabbits pulled out of hats; just great storytelling, characters and plot, and another stage in the life of Willie Black.

Disclosure: I was given a free preview edition by the publisher, the Permanent Press, and I offer my honest review.
